

# ARTS MARKETING INSTITUTE

## *A Backgrounder on the Arts Marketing Institute*

by Paul Minicucci, Deputy Director of the California Arts Council

### Introduction

If the purpose of California's new Arts Marketing Institute could be encapsulated in a single statement it might be this: to help art manifest more centrally in people's lives. We identify this goal based upon our belief that "the arts are essential to a healthy society as a source of personal enrichment and locus for building community, as important as clean air, free speech, and good libraries." This statement is the premise of a research project on the use of social marketing in the arts that was conducted by Theatre Bay Area.

Social marketing is a technique that uses elements of traditional marketing, target marketing, guerilla marketing, advocacy, education, advertising, cause marketing and other elements to bring about behavior change for the good of the individual and of society. Social marketing has been used successfully to encourage people to cease smoking, wear seatbelts, designate a driver, and practice safe sex. Can it be used to encourage people to engage more actively with the arts? We at the CAC believe it can.

The California Arts Council is one of 13 state arts agencies to receive an important grant from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds designed to increase public participation in the arts. The California grant, \$600,000 over three years, supports the work of the AMI. While other states are using their grants in a variety of ways--re-granting, advocacy, education, web-based marketing, and so forth--the CAC is the only state to channel its funding into the creation of an institute that will use social marketing to increase public participation. The AMI will be working through CALAA and the state and local partners to deliver its services to the field. This unique approach is critical to the future of the arts in California and to the well being of the people of California.

Every grantee of the California Arts Council will automatically be granted membership in the Institute, including artists-in-residence, arts education programs, organizational grantees, state/local partners and touring groups and presenters. Full access to services of the AMI will include assistance in the following specific areas:

- Social marketing
- Research, demographics and participation models
- Cultural tourism
- Web and electronic marketing and distance learning

- Special populations

We are asking each grantee to send us the name of the most appropriate contact person within their structure for marketing news (even if you did this last year). Please submit names, e-mail addresses and phone numbers to [btaylor@caartscouncil.com](mailto:btaylor@caartscouncil.com). If you have already done this, no need to do it again. I would like it if everyone would see this as an opportunity and not a requirement. We will not be checking to see if everyone participates, so there is no real requirement to do so, but since the Wallace Reader's Digest Funds Foundation, (our funder), is talking about a continued effort in increasing public participation, we think your involvement will be valuable to you.

We are developing plans for a summer conference on *Increasing Public Participation in the Arts* at which we will bring in speaker's and experts in traditional marketing, new techniques and social marketing as well as the other issue areas described above. The date is June 30-July 1, 2003 in Sacramento.

We also will be inviting people to serve on an external advisory panel. We would anticipate such a panel to include up to fifteen people. A second smaller group will be convened made up of local arts agencies or other entities that have marketing initiatives already in place. We do not want to duplicate existing efforts -- rather we want to disseminate and diffuse learning in marketing throughout the state. If you are interested in serving on the advisory panel, submit your name and resume to Belinda. You can nominate yourself or someone else. The advisory panel will help us develop the annual conference, structure our services and help us in developing participation markers.

## **I. Social Marketing**

One of the chief functions of the Arts Marketing Institute is to plan and execute a long-term social marketing campaign. Many people have asked me what social marketing is and I will answer that question in a little bit, but suffice to say that it has been a useful tool for policy makers working in health and safety fields. It requires the general public to internalize a campaign message and change their behavior based on the individual and community health ramifications of the behavior. Some examples are seat belt use; use of condoms, and most significantly the anti-tobacco campaign used by the California Department of Health Services. It is not at all unusual for government agencies to use these tools.

Arts Marketing Director Belinda Taylor, in the study she co-led with Sabrina Klein, "The Performing Arts: An Essential Public Good, Critical to a healthy Society" uses Alan R. Andresasen's definition for social marketing that we also will adopt. It is: "Social marketing is the analysis, planning, execution and

evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of their society."

In terms of participation in the arts we intend to communicate to sectors of the uninclined audiences, or even inclined audiences, that becoming a more active participant in the arts, including attending arts performances as well as making art, is a "normal" and healthy behavior. Studies including our own research survey last year demonstrate that for many people the arts remain mysterious and "abnormal." Sometimes that can work as an inducement but often is a negative. For example many people only attend arts events as part of a "special event." They may feel compelled to dress or act differently than is their norm. It is clear that Asian and European audiences have a vastly different perception of the arts as part and parcel of community life. As a result, these audiences begin in a more inclined posture. They are then much more aware of arts events in their community and the decision to attend arts events is steeped in behavior that is normal for them.

There are a couple of other factors about social marketing. Social marketing implicitly includes the concept of social context behavior change. That is, a social marketing program appeals to social values as well as personal values. For Americans the difference between the two is striking in their response to arts education. Many parents will exhibit strong opinions of the value of the arts for their children and yet not participate themselves. That is, they may readily admit that arts participation is a good thing in general but not for them in particular. One way to overcome that resistance is to seek individual behavior change. Niche marketing can appeal to a person to induce them as an individual to go to an arts event. However, social marketing also depends upon the person feeling that arts attendance is a good thing for the health of the society. They may place a higher value on changing their behavior because it contributes to the collective good. That value may be higher perhaps than individual action. So, sometimes appealing to the citizen's desire to connect and build civic capital may be an effective way to increase arts participation.

The second idea is that social marketing is a long-term endeavor. You cannot expect a behavior change to occur overnight. There are "ah-ha" experiences that many arts participants point to as moments of change in their lives. They seemingly come from outer space and cause an epiphany effect in a blinding flash. Upon closer inspection however, most of these events are characterized by a "readiness" to change that has already occurred. *Creating the appropriate readiness to change is the first step in a social marketing campaign.* Increased arts participation may rest heavily on a perceptual change in the arts or may be invoked through an association of the arts to normal and healthy social behavior. This may seem like a subtle distinction but the stage of change model is an important part of behavior change theory. In any case, it is the work of the AMI to provide this kind of "air campaign" that is statewide, higher level, social appeal that begins to poise arts as a healthy and socially beneficial endeavor that should

be a normal part of community and civic life. After that is achieved, uninclined audiences may be treated like inclined audiences. That means, in general, seeking to overcome practical rather than perceptual barriers. Niche or specific target marketing campaigns will appeal to them with much greater frequency.

While this issue is for the most part foreign to the way in which artists and arts organizations may approach their audiences, we strongly believe that it is the role of the state arts agency to provide the "bigger picture" so that individual change can be effected at the individual level. In any case, the AMI will be working to design and execute this campaign. We will be working with the artists, arts organizations and marketing directors throughout the state to develop a shared vocabulary and design this campaign in a manner consistent with traditional marketing approaches so the message will be consistent. Hopefully, we will be able to move people up the stage of change from disinclined to uninclined to inclined to participating. In a sense they will already have an affinity to the arts.

Next we will consider how the AMI will work with populations to help increase audience potential for the arts. This discussion will revolve around transforming collections of people into audiences. County fair audiences for example already exist. They may encounter arts (as opposed to entertainment) at a fair and never connect the dots that arts participation is available to them in the community on an ongoing basis. The same is true of older people who avail themselves of many group services and activities with an avowed appetite for the arts but they need a targeted inducement to go. That may involve different performing times, different performing places or any number of practical barriers. We will study how to transform participants in the services of one agency into active audiences and assist arts organizations with specific techniques to reach these and other audiences within special populations.

## **II. Increasing Arts Participation in Special Populations**

In using social marketing as a means to increase public participation in the arts we employ the concept of "air cover" in that social marketing is intended to persuade general populations to change (broaden, deepen, diversify) their personal behavior related to arts participation because it is a healthy behavior in their daily lives. Now I want to work at the other end of the looking glass. By making uses of relationships with other state and local agencies or ethnic networks, we can increase arts participation by tapping into the services or activities of other agencies that serve the public. While service systems are not traditionally seen as "audiences," nonetheless we should take advantage of these communal groupings to market the arts.

Let's examine a few examples of what I mean. One way to look at increasing participation in the arts through broadening, deepening and diversifying the arts

experience for artists/creators, audiences and stewards is to provide service directed at collections of people who are gathered for some other purpose and convert their presence into a cultural experience. One example is to look at the myriad services to young seniors, those people who may have just recently retired and who are very concerned about meaning in their lives. These seniors may have a difficult time transitioning from daily working environment to retirement. This shift may be an abrupt departure from their normal rhythm of life. Often this life change is accompanied by depression or a general sense of disconnection. These populations may or may not have an organized set of experiences in the arts. However, through agencies such as Area Agencies on Aging (Triple A's) who serve seniors through congregate nutrition services where thousands of active seniors meet not only for nutritional but also social objectives, we may be able to increase participation in the arts through targeted residencies.

The CAC has long viewed and made use of the arts as a tool or learning process in communities, schools and social institutions, but generally we have supported only artists who themselves have already made connections to a site or institution. We as an agency have not had a strategy to maximize the use of arts within human service agencies to reach all populations served by a sister state agency. We have been more successful in working in Correctional Facilities where the Department of Corrections funds residencies at over 30 sites. The CAC has equally significant residencies through the California Youth Authority and Department of Mental Health. The idea is to see how arts can further the array of service objectives these agencies have. We look for ways in which the arts can be used to engage the minds and hearts of incarcerated people in the creative process. In so doing we give people the tools to deepen an arts experience by having them engage in a significant artistic event, either as a maker or creator. The participants learn the artistic/creative process by making art and can transfer the process to problem solving in other areas of their lives. Naturally this is a very over-simplified view and these efforts are not new ideas for the CAC.

However, the point is that if decision makers such as legislators view the arts experience as an isolated act that takes place only in the private sector and essentially is the domain of one person making his or her decision to participate or not in the arts, and then the public value of arts services is diminished. Decision makers have yet to be convinced that this is a government concern.

What makes arts different from entertainment is the nature and depth of aesthetic experience and meaning. Being an active group participant in artistic expression that flows from deep social, cultural or social experience is not the essential realm of entertainment.

If we do not take the larger view of culture that South American, Latin American, Asian and European countries take, namely that the arts are a right to personal

expression, we do not fully avail ourselves of the tools we may have available to us. The role of the arts and arts agencies in many countries is that of the animateur. This animation model argues that the arts are the catalyst for human interaction and conversations. Arts are the means for public exchange of values and ideas. One way to engage people in an arts process is through their identification with other populations. One example of that has been our work in placing artists of quality into venues such as county fairs. In this example, artists perform to audiences who expect to be "entertained." Can we prepare the agency, the venue and the audience to expect more than entertainment and will the audience recognize the higher values of art when they experience it?

This is an essential set of questions that define the public value of the arts. We create new public value if we produce quality artistic experience in surprising venues or spaces among populations who have gathered (or have been called together) for some other purpose. However, one question is, what is this particular group expecting when they gather for example at a senior meal site? If they get an arts experience will they even recognize that fact? Or will they simply observe that they have been distracted from their daily life and "entertained." In the case of a county fair audience many audience members may only see the value of the experience as a quality entertainment experience. They may not translate this positive experience into a motivation for attending the same kind of performance in their own community outside the boundary of the fair-ground nor will they identify the value as being created by the arts service sector. This is an important distinction if we want to grow audiences. They must have a good experience with a quality artistic performer and they must recognize the encounter as an arts experience if we are to use this event as a motivational device to move them from an uninclined to inclined or participating audience member.

What the Arts Marketing Institute will provide is analysis for where these opportunities exist and how to improve them, work with non-arts venues to value the arts as a part of their service, and broaden as well as deepen the arts experience for both audience participants. We also will examine opportunities to work in the informal arts sector, that is people who make art for personal benefit or enrichment. The AMI Fellow(s) will work with local artists and arts organization to market their work and perform the all-important task of "connecting the dots" between the isolated experience at a non-arts venue into a greater likelihood of expecting and finding arts experiences in their neighborhood and communities.

The identification of arts as a vital force in the cultural life and expression for ethnic communities is also well known and of enormous significance to the public arts sector. The arts can be a medium of expression that a person can engage in between one person and another, between the individual and their immediate community or between communities and the greater community of California. Once again, working with arts specific to certain populations is a significant function of the CAC. The AMI will work with the infrastructure groups to identify

new markets for ethnically specific work and will help the import and export of ideas between populations.

In summary, we believe that there is a function the CAC must play in connecting populations to individuals in their cultural environment and between cultural environments and finally to the people of the state. In doing so, the arts will help reduce social isolation, personal alienation and build civic capital. The AMI will assist our artists and organizations through accurate analysis of these social systems, look for increased opportunities for exposure and support artists and organizations in building bridges to new communities.

Next we will move to part three of the AMI, or Cultural Tourism. We will describe our expectations in this sector as well as preview the kinds of service the field can receive from the AMI. Each of these issues I hope become the foundation stones for building arts participation and creating public value. As always, please feel free to comment. Send comments to Paul or Belinda Taylor at [pminicucci@caartscouncil.com](mailto:pminicucci@caartscouncil.com) or btaylor at the same address.

### III. Cultural Tourism

#### *California dreamin' on such a winter's day....*

The purpose of the Wallace grant is to increase public participation in the arts in three ways, deepening, broadening and diversifying participation among audiences, artists/creators, and stewards. Since that task is a very large one here in California, we have decided to develop an information dissemination and technical assistance mechanism through this program we call the Arts Marketing Institute which, in turn, will be using the CALAA network to begin its outreach. The AMI is a real and virtual institute that will provide services through regional fellows in five issue areas. Those areas are social marketing, special populations, cultural tourism, web and electronic marketing and research and dissemination in relevant participation research. The AMI will also provide services and assistance on more traditional marketing subjects.

In addition, it would be helpful for the field to gain some perspective on this project by visiting a Website that Wallace Funds have prepared called [http://www.arts4allpeople.org./](http://www.arts4allpeople.org/) I suggest that all grantees become familiar with the documents on this site. They form the theoretical basis for what we are doing and why.

Cultural tourism as a concept and phrase has come into general use in the past few years to connote an area of endeavor in which the arts and other cultural events and activities become a central plank in building a platform for both in-state and out-of-state tourism. Many people now recognize that the arts can be a primary attraction or destination for tourists but more likely play an important role in the overall destination planning as secondary attractions.

One overlooked feature of cultural tourism is how it links to increasing public participation. One could imagine for example that a hotel full of tourists is an available audience resource for arts organizations in any locale. How one motivates, arranges for and moves these tourists to spend their resources on arts events is at the heart of what cultural tourism is about.

Cultural tourism depends upon careful planning, marketing and coordination between a number of different industries, agencies both private and governmental, and related services. New York City for example, carefully planned their economic recovery after 9/11 on significant investment in promoting the arts and moving people back into Manhattan. Since it rarely is anyone's particular job to promote cultural tourism, it falls to state and local arts agencies to try and develop the appropriate connections and linkages. These agencies in turn will work with visitor's bureau and the California Department of Tourism. As you probably know, we have taken the first step in that relationship by launching the CultureCalifornia.com website last year. This is just a start along the path of complete cultural tourism resources on line.

So the CAC through the AMI and other programs has clearly come to the position that "best practices" need to be established and infrastructure built to take advantage of tourism as the commercial entertainment sector does. However, it is rare that the arts are the "primary attraction" for tourists. I realize that many arts administrators and artists may object to the use of the term "attraction" but I think it is incumbent upon use to use the language that exists in the tourism area. What attraction means is a performance or event that draws people. Mostly we use the term for such things as amusement parks. That's actually all to the good when you think about it. Major attractions like the San Diego Zoo have huge marketing budgets. Using them as "the fetch" to bring tourists into an area is a good thing. Some day-trippers will drive to San Diego to go to the zoo but mostly it is multiple day tourists who travel to San Diego. So, the arts are now in a position to capitalize on the tourist who is in San Diego for the zoo but wants to do other things once they are there. How do we position ourselves then to be the "secondary attraction" of choice? It is difficult for any arts organization even large ones to advertise in other cities in California to specifically capture business. It is important to note by the way that 85% of California tourists are Californians. They already likely know about natural attractions. It is secondary attractions they need to know about.

The AMI will examine and explore all possible cultural tourism tools. We will be putting together a cultural tourism tool-kit and hold training sessions in the five regions of the state to bring artists and arts organizations in to expose them to whatever tools exist. This area like social marketing is a long-term issue. Specifically, the AMI could be a vital link to the tourism industry by building linkages, by finding ways to book cultural tours, to train concierges at hotels to be knowledgeable about local arts, to build effective cultural tourism websites and to help rural arts groups to take advantage of tourism.



We will have two fellows working in this area. They will be exploring new ways to market to tourists and create opportunities for increased public participation through cultural tourism. I would urge arts organizations, particularly smaller ones to be involved in the development of some of these tools.

#### **IV. Research**

The Arts Marketing Institute bases its work upon two pieces of research: "A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts" by Kevin F. McCarthy and Kimberly Jinnett, published by RAND with support from the Wallace-Readers Digest Funds, available at [www.arts4allpeople.org](http://www.arts4allpeople.org); and, "Social Marketing of the Arts" by Sabrina Klein, Belinda Taylor and John Warren, published by Theatre Bay Area with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, available on this site and at [www.theatrebayarea.org](http://www.theatrebayarea.org). The work of the AMI is further informed by case studies and analysis by Harvard professor Mark Moore in his book, "Creating Public Value."

One of the AMI Fellows, Sam Gilmore, Ph.D. a sociologist and lecturer at UC-Irvine, is an arts ethnographer and researcher who will work with the Institute to discover new and relevant research as well as participate in shaping the arts economic impact study the CAC will conduct in spring of 2003.

Meanwhile, as AMI Fellows begin to work in the field in the various regions of the state they will be listening as well as presenting new ideas about participation, and they will share what they learn with one another and the field.

The effort to change behavior resulting in greater public participation in the arts is a complicated and long-term project, but as they say, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

#### **V. Web and Electronic Marketing**

How best can we use our resources to assist artists and organizations to use new technologies to increase the effectiveness of product marketing? There have been many advances in the past few years in the field of general (core) and niche marketing using such things as web advertising, combined mailing lists and groups, refined demographics, e-mail, voice-mail and other devices.

The marketing director for a prominent health organization who has won many awards for public relations and marketing recently told me that in this day of information overload a prospective customer needs to be "hit" five times before they will commit or reject an invitation to participate in an event. Five times. It is

hard not to lose heart when confronted with these kinds of concepts. How can arts organizations even large ones afford five hits on each prospective customer?

First off, I think old Danny Newman's 2% return rate ratio is probably out of date. The slippage in season ticket buyers is also a problematic issue. If we could envision hitting solid inclined and participating audiences five times and they renew or buy season tickets at a high rate, then traditional marketing techniques probably would suffice. When arts organizations face the prospect of competing with commercial venues (such as movies) on a single ticket at a time basis, we have a problem.

So, what are some solutions? I think it would presumptuous of me to try and answer this question here. First off, I am not certain we know the answer(s). More importantly some apparent solutions are not viewed favorably by a sometime fractious arts community. We are good at competing but when it comes to marketing we have to become more adroit at collaborating. No organization in California has enough resources to hit its prospective customers five times each. We have to look at the problem in a new way.

I do think some of the answers are inherent in the following discussions:

1. Pooling demographic data and sharing lists is a good thing. It allows us to do more effective niche marketing because we can achieve a higher rate of return if the buyer has more "likely" buy characteristics that a general approach.
2. We do have to re-examine the season ticket question. Are there modifications we can observe? Has anyone tried the idea of two or more institutions linking up to offer a shared season "sampling" ticket such as three shows at three different venues? Have we exhausted all the possibilities of building a new kind of season and a new kind of ticket-buyer?
3. Collaboration between organizations must increase.
4. Variable ticket pricing may be an answer.
5. New uses of the web and electronic selling to be explored and effective models need to be disseminated.
6. We need to find out what role "convenience" plays in bringing art to people.
7. We need to use techniques for overcoming buyer lethargy being used by commercial entertainment. Barriers need to be removed. Incentives need to be examined.
8. We need to look a lot more at voice-mail that has shown some results in other parts of the country. Specifically, so-called "celebrity" calling needs to be utilized. (More on that later).
9. We need to extend cultural tourism to include not just visibility and advertising but easy electronic ticket buying.

10. We need to take advantage of informal decision maker networks. This is sometimes called "utilizing Mavens." (Don't yell at me, I didn't make the term up.)
11. We need to increase our market research learning. The use of computers to analyze likely buyers is an important feature. That is, using characteristic analysis.
12. Try to increase subscription renewals, through incentives.
13. Using techniques like "instant critics" to improve timely word of mouth marketing.
14. We should explore "neighborhood marketing" techniques. Professional sports have used this technique well. Remember that one of the most basic barriers to more participation we identified in the public opinion survey was "need to go to arts events with friends, neighbors and family."

These are just a few of the subjects that we will be studying. In any case, the AMI will be using its resources in conjunction with the many marketing initiatives already under way in California to comb the landscape for new techniques, aimed largely at using new technology. We will sponsor seminars in the five regions on a regular basis to disseminate our findings. The AMI won't be the absolute answer to all of our marketing needs, but hopefully we will use all of our resources to make your efforts more effective.

I hope by now, everyone who has followed this discussion will see how the five issue areas of the AMI, social marketing, cultural tourism, special populations, new research in participation responses (along with building public value) and new specific techniques for marketing intersect. But the AMI is a work in progress. We do not have all the resources we should have, but I think the Arts Marketing Institute is a good start. It is all about deepening, broadening and diversifying participation in the arts.

Naturally, we can't and shouldn't try to do this task alone. Certainly there are artists, marketing experts working on these issues. There are a number of marketing initiatives underway in California and in other states and countries far more sophisticated than our endeavor. Let's keep the lines of communication open. The model of an institute is a two-way street. You will learn from the Institute, the Institute will learn from you and pass it on. In the end, the success of this effort will depend upon successful communication and mutual respect. Let's break a leg!